

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 035753

TOSEC 351

TAGS:ET, US, PINS, PFOR

SUBJECT: SITUATION REPORT NO. 26, SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA

AS OF 0600 HOURS (EST) FEBRUARY 15, 1975

1. THE NIGHT WAS GENERALLY QUIET ALTHOUGH THERE WAS A BRIEF ERUPTION OF GUNFIRE IN ONE TRACT AT 1650Z AND AN UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO SABOTAGE A US MILITARY AIRCRAFT BY TAMPERING WITH IT DURING REFUELING OPERATIONS AT HAAB.

2. UNCONFIRMED REPORTS STATE THAT THE ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT (ELF) FREED APPROXIMATELY 800 POLITICAL PRISONERS FROM PRISONS NEAR ASMARA DURING THE NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 13. THE ELF IS ALSO SAID TO BE INFILTRATING INTO ADDIS.

3. LA TIMES CORRESPONDENT, DIAL TORGESON, ONE OF TWO AMERICAN JOURNALISTS DETAINED BRIEFLY AFTER TRAVELING TO ASMARA WITHOUT GOVERNMENT PERMISSION, PUBLISHED HIS STORY IN THE FEBRUARY 14 WASHINGTON POST. ACCORDING TO TORGESON'S ACCOUNT, UNDISCIPLINED GOVERNMENT TROOPS REACTED AGAINST GUERRILLA ATTACKS IN ERITREA PROVINCE BY VENTING THEIR ANGER ON HELPLESS CIVILIANS, LOOTING THEIR HOMES AND SHOPS AND SLAUGHTERING MANY HUNDREDS. SOME SOURCES PLACE THE CIVILIAN DEATHS AS HIGH AS THREE
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THOUSAND.

4. THE KUWAITI FOREIGN MINISTER HAS CALLED FOR AN END TO FIGHTING IN ASMARA AND FOR INDEPENDENCE FOR ERITREA.

5. ERITREAN SECESSIONISTS IN BEIRUT AND IN DAMASCUS APPEALED TO THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU) TO ADD THE ERITREAN PROBLEM TO ITS AGENDA. SO FAR, THE OAU HAS NOT DONE SO. IN THE PAST IT HAS BEEN LOATH TO BECOME INVOLVED IN PROBLEMS PERTAINING TO AFRICAN SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS, REGARDING SUCH ISSUES AS WITHIN THE "INTERNAL AFFAIRS" OF THE PARTICULAR STATE. THE OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IS CURRENTLY MEETING IN ADDIS ABABA.

6. WE HAVE INSTUCTED OUR EMBASSY TO INFORM EPMG THAT THE US IS PREPARED, FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS, TO SELL EXCESS ELECTRICAL POWER FROM US FACILITIES AT KAGNEW STATION TO THE ETHIOPIAN LIGHT AND POWER AUTHORITY FOR USE IN ASMARA. A PRECONDITION TO THE AGREEMENT IS THAT EPMG GUARANTEE FULL PAYMENT TO THE USG. INGERSOLL

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